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GENERATING EVIDENCE OF GOVERNANCE CONTRIBUTIONS TO HEALTH OUTCOMES

Workshop Summary Report

July 23, 2014

Background

There is a lack of evidence and understanding of the dynamics of how and contexts in which improved health system governance can contribute to improved health outcomes. As donors and governments increase their emphasis on improving the accountability and transparency of health systems, there is an ever increasing need for evidence of which governance interventions best contribute to measurable improvements in health outcomes such as reduction in maternal or child mortality, or increased coverage of HIV/AIDS treatment.

Demonstrating direct attribution of improved health system governance to specific and quantifiable health outcomes is difficult. Where health governance contributions are clearer, however, is in what can be considered intermediate health outcomes, including:

- Access to services: Citizens can avail themselves of essential health services with protection from financial risks.
- Quality: Services and commodities are high quality; pharmaceuticals are available and medical professionals present.
- Equity: The health system is responsive to the needs of all segments of the population, particularly women, youth, marginalized groups and the poor.
- Efficiency: Management of funds in the public health sector has sufficient oversight and economy.

On July 23, 2014 the USAID Health Finance and Governance Project (HFG) hosted a one-day workshop on generating evidence of governance contributions to health outcomes. The event brought together over 50 health and governance professionals from USAID, external organizations, and implementing partners to identify key evidence gaps and develop actionable steps for addressing those gaps.

Workshop Objectives

1. Initiate discussion on the common threshold for research and the range of evidence among health and governance participants.
2. Identify evidence gaps and priority research questions.
3. Create an actionable plan to link priority questions with existing mechanisms to conduct research and impact assessments.

Workshop Results

Priority Research Questions

A key output of the HFG Evidence Generation workshop was a prioritized list of evidence gaps and associated research questions for how governance contributes to health outcomes. Small groups produced a total of 20 ideas that were displayed for the whole group to share and discuss. Participants were then asked to vote for the evidence gaps and associated research questions. The table below presents the prioritized list of evidence gaps and research questions.

The top ranked priority gaps focused on the following issues:

- Fostering political will – the factors, incentives and motivations that influence decision making of health sector leaders and effective coalitions for reform.
- The sustainability of accountability mechanisms – how to institutionalize country mechanisms for oversight and accountability after external support ends.
- Prioritizing governance interventions – how to determine which governance activities provide the greatest gains to increase access to health services, improve health service quality and equity, and increase health system efficiency.

Table I below presents the evidence gaps and research questions produced during the HFG workshop.

Table I: Prioritized List of Evidence Gaps and Research Questions

| Evidence Gaps | Research Themes |
|--|--|
| The lack of sufficient understanding of the factors that motivate leaders for or against health reform. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How can donor funded efforts interact most effectively with health officials to build the political value of health outcomes?• What are requisites for successful and effective health reform coalitions?• What are the most effective methods and tools for mapping allies and opponents of health reform and their interests?• How can donor funded efforts most effectively promote technical/managerial competence as a measure of success in health? |
| How to promote the sustainability of governance reforms. | Once external support ends, what factors are most important to sustaining accountability mechanisms/processes? |
| Proof that governance leads to sustained improvements in health outcomes. | How does country ownership contribute to improving governance to achieve health outcomes? |
| What are the most effective governance interventions that impact/improve access; quality; availability; financial protection and responsiveness for health services? | What evidence is there to show that access/availability/quality; financial protection, and responsiveness have an impact on health outcomes? |
| How political factors serve as barriers to achieving health outcomes. | What are the factors and incentives that motivate decision makers at the national and subnational level to set and achieve health goals? |

| Evidence Gaps | Research Themes |
|---|--|
| How to build capacity in core governance functions. | What are the most cost-effective interventions to build sustainable governance capacity? |
| How is evidence used in health decision making in different context/levels. | What individual and structural factors influence how evidence is used for decision-making? |
| How national and subnational power structures have an impact on health reforms and decision making. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What governance interventions help to increase accountability of officials within health systems? • What is the importance of health relative to other development challenges in a country? |
| How increased transparency in health service delivery improves health outcomes. | When do social accountability tools such as audits and community scorecards, increase citizen demand for good health services? Do they result in improvements to quality? |
| The impact of individual corruption on health outcomes. | What specific interventions can reduce individual corruption among health sector workers? |
| How to build a common agenda around commitment to health outcomes. | What are the factors that contribute to the development of common agendas for sustainable national level health reforms? |
| How to ensure commitment to reform isn't reversed as a result of political change. | What methods and approaches are most effective to strengthen the impact of governance efforts so that they lead to sustained improvements in health outcomes? |
| What is the impact of corruption in the Public vs. private sector services? | How does corruption in the public vs. private sector services affect health outcomes? |

Opportunities for Generating Evidence

A second key HFG workshop objective was to identify opportunities for evidence generation. Small groups discussed these opportunities which they shared with the entire group. The following summarizes the broad categories of the most promising and immediate opportunities.

1) Leveraging existing USAID evidence generation efforts

The PPL (Policy Planning and Learning Bureau) is committed to do ex-post evaluations. They are starting in education and with encouragement could also include health.

2) The DRG learning agenda includes over 20 randomized control trials. These could be augmented to add another module focused on health. Developing clear health governance metrics

Clear and consistent governance indicators would offer the full range of partner organizations a framework for defining and measuring health system governance intervention.

3) Cross project collaboration

The implementing partners working on health governance are already coordinating with each other. Finding opportunities to coordinate and leverage common evidence generation efforts in the field would benefit the entire community.

4) Mining existing evidence

While much of the discussion focused on prospective evidence generation, significant retrospective data on governance and health outcomes exists. Mining this data was raised as an opportunity to explain the impact of health governance activities.

Next Steps

Key next steps for pursuing opportunities for generating evidence for how governance contributes to health outcomes include further discussions at the USAID Leadership, Management and Governance project Governance Roundtable (September 29-30, 2014) and the 3rd Health Systems Research Symposium (October 1-3, 2014).

Moving forward, HFG will begin actively engaging in activities to generate activities. This evidence generation may take the following forms:

- Initiating stand-alone research initiatives tackling high priority issues raised during the workshop;
- Expanding of supplementing ongoing efforts by adding technical contributions on governance in research design, or replicating studies to provide cross country perspectives; and
- Applying research approaches to HFG governance activities.

HFG will also continue to dialogue with global partners, and identify opportunities for collaborative research in linking governance contributions to health outcomes. A follow-up workshop is anticipated for 2015.

Information on the workshop, including videos of the morning sessions, can be found at:

<https://www.hfgproject.org/governance-workshop/>



Generating Evidence of Governance Contributions to Health Outcomes Workshop

July 23, 2014
 The National Press Club
 Washington DC

Workshop Objectives:

- Initiate discussion on common threshold for research and range of evidence among health and governance participants.
- Identify evidence gaps and priority research questions.
- Create an actionable plan to link priority questions with existing mechanisms to conduct research and impact assessments.

| Time | Session |
|--------------|--|
| 9:00 – 9:30 | <u>Registration</u> |
| 9:30 – 9:50 | <u>Introduction and Workshop Start-up</u> Karen Cavanaugh, USAID/Director of the Office of Health Systems (OHS) Jodi Charles, USAID/OHS |
| 9:50 – 11:00 | <u>Session I: Current State of Evidence</u> Objective: Establish standard understanding of how to understand evidence and the state of thinking on governance contributions to health systems and health outcomes. Presentation Dr. Sara Bennett, Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health Q & A |

Session 2: Mapping Ongoing Evidence Generation

Objective: *Provide participants with an understanding of what USAID and other key partners are doing to generate evidence.*

11:00 – 12:15

Presentations

Dr. Joe Naimoli, *USAID/OHS*

Nicole Bonoff, *USAID/Center of Excellence for Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (DRG)*

Dr. Denis Porignon, *World Health Organization*

Group Activity - Share other significant efforts

12:15 – 1:00

Lunch

Session 3: Evidence Gaps

Objective: *Start dialogue between health and governance participants about where priority gaps in evidence, why these exist and how to overcome them.*

1:00 – 2:45

Panel Discussion

Bob Emrey, *USAID/OHS*

Laura Pavlovic, *USAID/DRG*

Dr. Derick Brinkerhoff, *RTI International*

Jeremy Kanthor, *DAI/HFG* (Moderator)

Table Activity – Identify priority research questions

2:45 – 3:00

Break

Session 4: A Plan for Evidence Generation

Objective: *Discuss priority research questions and identify possible opportunities to begin generating evidence.*

3:00 – 4:30

Presentation of Evidence Priorities with Plenary Discussion

Table Activity – List possible opportunities to begin evidence generation

Session 5: Conclusion & Summary of Next Steps

4:30 – 5:00

Jodi Charles, *USAID/OHS*

Dr. Ann Lion, *Abt Associates/HFG*